

I CLAIM:

1. A gaming system which includes:
 - a control unit;
 - a plurality of gaming machines linked to the control unit;
 - 5 an identifier associated with one of each player and each gaming machine, the identifier providing an indication to the control unit as to whether or not the player wishes to participate in a cooperative gaming environment; and
 - the control unit monitoring operation of the gaming machines in the cooperative gaming environment and, each time any one of a number of predetermined elements of
 - 10 the cooperative gaming environment changes, generating a milestone and using the milestone so that no one player in the cooperative gaming environment benefits at the expense of the other players participating in the cooperative gaming environment.
2. The system of claim 1 in which the control unit includes a registration module
- 15 for registering players that accept to participate in the cooperative gaming environment.
3. The system of claim 1 in which the control unit includes a rules-establishing module for establishing rules of the cooperative gaming environment, the rules determining general operating conditions of the cooperative gaming environment.
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4. The system of claim 3 in which the rules-establishing module relies at least in part on player input in establishing the rules.
5. The system of claim 4 in which the rules include whether or not new players
- 25 may join the cooperative gaming environment, what happens when someone wishes to leave the cooperative gaming environment, whether the players all play the one game or if resources are to be pooled, whether the players are to play the same strategy or to choose their own strategy, whether players are able to determine their own investment or invest the same amount, whether wins are transferred to a credit pool of each player
- 30 or are stored and distributed at the end of a cooperative gaming session or any other special criteria.

6. The system of claim 3 which includes a display so that, once the rules have been established, they are displayed to the players.

7. The system of claim 5 in which one of the rules relates to how disputes are to be resolved.

8. The system of claim 1 in which the control unit includes an allocating module for allocating a mixture of higher volatility and lower volatility games to the players participating in the cooperative gaming environment so that there is an even distribution of gaming machine volatility in the cooperative gaming environment.

9. The system of claim 1 in which the control unit provides the players participating in the cooperative gaming environment with the opportunity to adopt different strategies so that risk is distributed between the players participating in the cooperative gaming environment.

10. The system of claim 1 in which the control unit allows existing players to exit and new players to enter the cooperative gaming environment in certain circumstances.

11. The system of claim 1 in which the control unit includes a generating module for generating the milestones, the generating module, when a milestone needs to be generated, allowing all games in progress to be completed and then record the status of credit meters of all participating gaming machines and the current amount won at each of the participating gaming machines, the generating module of the control unit determining a final amount distributed to each player for each of the phases between milestones.

12. The system of claim 11 in which the predetermined elements of the cooperative gaming environment which are subject to change and which lead to the generation of milestones include the total number of players either increasing or decreasing, the total amount of stake risked or when any single player's credits are depleted.

13. The system of claim 11 in which, when a new player joins an existing cooperative gaming environment, the generating module generates a milestone and records a current accumulated contribution by the players participating prior to the new
5 player joining and a current amount won by those players.

14. A method of implementing cooperative gaming which includes:
monitoring a plurality of gaming machines linked to a control unit;
offering players playing those gaming machines an opportunity to compete in a cooperative gaming environment; and
monitoring the cooperative gaming environment and, when any one of a number
10 of predetermined elements of the cooperative gaming environment changes, generating a milestone and using the milestone so that no one player in the cooperative gaming environment benefits at the expense of the other players participating in the cooperative gaming environment.

15 15. The method of claim 14 which includes informing the players playing the gaming machines of the opportunity to participate in the cooperative gaming environment.

16. The method of claim 14 which includes initiating the cooperative gaming
20 environment by one of the system and any one of the players, the players electing, at their option, whether or not to compete in the cooperative gaming environment.

17. The method of claim 16 which includes registering players that do accept to participate in the cooperative gaming environment.

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18. The method of claim 17 which includes identifying locations that will form part of the cooperative gaming environment, allowing the players to nominate how much they wish to invest and determining whether or not there are sufficient players to constitute a cooperative gaming environment.

19. The method of claim 14 which includes establishing rules of the cooperative gaming environment, the rules determining general operating conditions of the cooperative gaming environment.

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20. The method of claim 19 which includes relying at least in part on player input in establishing the rules.

21. The method of claim 19 which includes establishing whether or not new players
10 may join the cooperative gaming environment, what happens when someone wishes to leave the cooperative gaming environment, whether the players all play the one game or if resources are to be pooled, whether the players are to play the same strategy or to choose their own strategy, whether players are able to determine their own investment or invest the same amount, whether wins are transferred to a credit pool of each player
15 or are stored and distributed at the end of a cooperative gaming session or any other special criteria.

22. The method of claim 19 which includes, once the rules have been established, displaying the rules to the players.

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23. The method of claim 22 which includes offering the players a further opportunity to elect whether or not to continue in the cooperative gaming environment.

24. The method of claim 19 which includes establishing how disputes are to be
25 resolved.

25. The method of claim 14 which includes allocating a mixture of higher volatility and lower volatility games to the players participating in the cooperative gaming environment so that there is an even distribution of gaming machine volatility in the
30 cooperative gaming environment.

26. The method of claim 14 which includes providing the players participating in the cooperative gaming environment with the opportunity to adopt different strategies so that risk is distributed between the players participating in the cooperative gaming environment.

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27. The method of claim 14 which includes during the course of play in the cooperative gaming environment, allowing existing players to exit and new players to enter the cooperative gaming environment in certain circumstances.

10 28. The method of claim 14 which includes, when a milestone needs to be generated, allowing all games in progress to be completed and then recording the status of credit meters of all participating gaming machines and the current amount won at each of the participating gaming machines and determining a final amount distributed to each player for each of the phases between milestones.

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29. The method of claim 28 in which the predetermined elements of the cooperative gaming environment which are subject to change and which lead to the generation of milestones include the total number of players either increasing or decreasing, the total amount of stake risked or when any single player's credits are depleted.

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30. The method of claim 28 which includes, when a new player joins an existing cooperative gaming environment, generating a milestone and recording a current accumulated contribution by the players participating prior to the new player joining and a current amount won by those players.

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31. The method of claim 30 which includes, at the end of a cooperative gaming session, weighing credit contributed by the new player against a current credit total for future proportion of final wins.

32. The method of claim 14 which includes, should a player wish to leave the cooperative gaming environment prior to the end of a session, allowing the player to do so only when the cooperative gaming environment is idle.

5 33. The method of claim 32 which includes when the player wishes to leave the cooperative gaming environment resolving and displaying all existing games for all the other players and then allocating a current prize pool accordingly.

34. The method of claim 32 which includes, when any one player leaves, offering
10 all the remaining players the opportunity to leave.

35. The method of claim 32 which includes, when the player leaves, leaving unallocated residual credits in a remaining prize pool.

15 36. The method of claim 32 which includes, when the player leaves, resolving payment of unallocated residual credits by a preselected strategy.

37. A gaming system which includes:
a control unit;
20 a plurality of gaming machines linked to the control unit;
an identifier associated with one of each player and each gaming machine, the identifier providing an indication to the control unit as to whether or not the player wishes to participate in a cooperative gaming environment; and
the control unit providing the players participating in the cooperative gaming
25 environment with the opportunity to adopt different strategies so that risk is distributed between the players participating in the cooperative gaming environment.

38. The system of claim 37 in which the control unit includes a registration module for registering players that accept to participate in the cooperative gaming environment.

39. The system of claim 37 in which the control unit includes a rules-establishing module for establishing rules of the cooperative gaming environment, the rules determining general operating conditions of the cooperative gaming environment.

5 40. The system of claim 39 in which the rules-establishing module relies at least in part on player input in establishing the rules.

41. The system of claim 40 in which the rules include whether or not new players may join the cooperative gaming environment, what happens when someone wishes to
10 leave the cooperative gaming environment, whether the players all play the one game or if resources are to be pooled, whether the players are to play the same strategy or to choose their own strategy, whether players are able to determine their own investment or invest the same amount, whether wins are transferred to a credit pool of each player or are stored and distributed at the end of a cooperative gaming session or any other
15 special criteria

42. The system of claim 37 which includes a display so that, once the rules have been determined, they are displayed to the players.

20 43. The system of claim 41 in which one of the rules relates to how disputes are to be resolved.

44. The system of claim 37 in which the control unit includes an allocating module for allocating a mixture of higher volatility and lower volatility games to the players
25 participating in the cooperative gaming environment so that there is an even distribution of gaming machine volatility in the cooperative gaming environment.

45. The system of claim 37 in which the control unit allows existing players to exit and new players to enter in certain circumstances.

46. A method of implementing cooperative gaming, the method including the steps of:
- maintaining a plurality of gaming machines linked to a control unit;
 - offering players playing those gaming machines an opportunity to compete in a
 - 5 cooperative gaming environment; and
 - allowing the players electing to participate in the cooperative gaming environment to adopt different gaming strategies so that risk is distributed amongst the players in the cooperative gaming environment.
- 10 47. The method of claim 46 which includes informing the players playing the gaming machines of the opportunity to participate in the cooperative gaming environment.
48. The method of claim 46 which includes initiating the cooperative gaming
- 15 environment by one of the system and any one of the players, the players electing, at their option, whether or not to compete in the cooperative gaming environment.
49. The method of claim 48 which includes registering players that do accept to participate in the cooperative gaming environment.
- 20 50. The method of claim 49 which includes identifying locations that will form part of the cooperative gaming environment, allowing the players to nominate how much they wish to invest and determining whether or not there are sufficient players to constitute a cooperative gaming environment.
- 25 51. The method of claim 46 which includes establishing rules of the cooperative gaming environment, the rules determining general operating conditions of the cooperative gaming environment.
- 30 52. The method of claim 51 which includes relying at least in part on player input in establishing the rules.

53. The method of claim 51 which includes establishing whether or not new players may join the cooperative gaming environment, what happens when someone wishes to leave the cooperative gaming environment, whether the players all play the one game
5 or if resources are to be pooled, whether the players are to play the same strategy or to choose their own strategy, whether players are able to determine their own investment or invest the same amount, whether wins are transferred to a credit pool of each player or are stored and distributed at the end of a cooperative gaming session or any other special criteria.
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54. The method of claim 51 which includes, once the rules have been established, displaying the rules to the players.
55. The method of claim 54 which includes offering the players a further
15 opportunity to elect whether or not to continue in the cooperative gaming environment.
56. The method of claim 51 which includes establishing how disputes are to be resolved.
- 20 57. The method of claim 46 which includes allocating a mixture of higher volatility and lower volatility games to the players participating in the cooperative gaming environment so that there is an even distribution of gaming machine volatility in the cooperative gaming environment.
- 25 58. The method of claim 46 which includes during the course of play in the cooperative gaming environment, allowing existing players to exit and new players to enter the cooperative gaming environment in certain circumstances.
- 30 59. The method of claim 46 which includes, should a player wish to leave the cooperative gaming environment prior to the end of a session, allowing the player to do so only when the cooperative gaming environment is idle.

60. The method of claim 59 which includes when the player wishes to leave the cooperative gaming environment resolving and displaying all existing games for all the other players and then allocating a current prize pool accordingly.

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61. The method of claim 59 which includes, when any one player leaves, offering all the remaining players the opportunity to leave.

62. The method of claim 59 which includes, when the player leaves, leaving
10 unallocated residual credits in a remaining prize pool.

63. The method of claim 59 which includes, when the player leaves, resolving payment of unallocated residual credits by a preselected strategy.